



**David Sconce**

...under investigation

## Ex-employee of crematory: Ashes mixed

From staff and wire reports

**VICTORVILLE** — A former employee of a crematory told authorities the company routinely burned as many as 15 bodies at once, mingling the ashes and collecting about four ounces of gold from the remains weekly.

The informant said it was his job at times to place ashes into urns to be returned to funeral homes or clients, and he "was not sure of whose remains were placed into any specific urn."

The informant, who was not iden-

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tified, was described in San Bernardino Superior Court documents released Tuesday as a former worker at Coastal Cremations, also known as Pasadena Crematorium of Altadena.

The crematory was operated by David Sponce, 31. He and his father, Jerry Sponce, 54, owner of Lamb Funeral Home in Pasadena, were arrested Jan. 29 for investigation of stealing gold from corpses.

David Sponce also has been under investigation by the state attorney general's office and the state Cemetery Board. Investigators allege he operated an illegal crematory in Hesperia under the guise of a ceramics plant called Oscars Ceramics.

In 1984, Sponce applied for Kern County permits to build and operate a large crematory near Shafter. After nearby residents opposed the

plan, supervisors turned down Sponce's request.

Sponce's Hesperia ceramics plant, which allegedly was being operated as an unlicensed crematory, was closed Jan. 20 by Hesperia Fire District officials after neighbors complained about foul odors.

Authorities said they found two kilns inside the plant containing partially burned corpses, and a sludge on the floor identified as a mix of diesel fuel and body fluids.

Authorities allege David Sponce began burning bodies at the Hesperia plant when Pasadena Crematorium burned down Nov. 23. They say because the investigation is continuing, formal charges have not been filed against the Sponces.

The Sponces' attorney, Roger Diamond, denied the informant's allegations concerning Pasadena Crematorium and demanded to know his identity.

"I think it is fundamental in our

system of justice that we be able to confront our accusers under the Sixth Amendment," he said.

Diamond insisted at the time of the Sponces' arrests that the two had written permission from relatives of the deceased to take gold and tissue from corpses but did not do so.

The informant insisted he never knew that mixing ashes of the dead is illegal without written permission from relatives.

His statements appear on a search warrant served Jan. 29 at the Lamb Funeral Home, owned by the Sponce family. The documents said deputies seized two Styrofoam cups containing gold fillings.

The informant alleged David Sponce had collected cups of gold from the corpses at the end of each day.

The informant is one of several people cooperating in the investigation, authorities said.